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Letter dated 28 April 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the forty-third monthly report of the Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) (see annex). The report covers the period from 23 March to 22 April 2017.

The situation with regard to the destruction of the chemical weapons production facilities declared by the Syrian Arab Republic remains unchanged. OPCW has verified the destruction of 24 of the 27 declared facilities. The Director General, in his note to the OPCW Executive Council, reiterates that the security situation continues to preclude access to the three remaining facilities.

I note that, in March 2017, the Director General invited the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to resume the high-level consultations to address the unresolved issues related to the declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic, and that the timing of such discussions is currently under consideration. I welcome the pending resumption of those consultations and continue to encourage the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and OPCW to cooperate on resolving those issues.

I am deeply distressed by the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic as confirmed by the Director General in his note to the OPCW Executive Council. As previously determined by the Security Council, the use of chemical weapons anywhere constitutes a threat to international peace and security and a serious violation of international law. I hope that the Security Council will now be able to come together and use the tools available to it to take concrete steps to ensure that those who have used chemical weapons are held accountable, in order to deter and put an end to those inhumane acts. There can be no impunity for such abhorrent attacks.

The OPCW fact-finding mission in Syria is continuing its work to further investigate allegations concerning the use of chemical weapons in the Khan Shaykhun area in southern Idlib, on 4 April 2017, and in Umm Hawsh, on 15 and 16 September 2016. I note that the Director General states that an interim report on the Khan Shaykhun attack will be submitted in the coming weeks and that a report on the allegation of the use of chemical weapons at Umm Hawsh will be submitted in the coming days. I also note the confirmation by the fact-finding mission that the two female victims reported in relation to the incident in Umm Hawsh were exposed to sulfur mustard, and the reference of the Director General to incontrovertible

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analytical results that the victims in Khan Shaykhun were exposed to sarin or a sarin-like substance.

I reiterate my call upon all States to support the critical OPCW fact-finding mission, as well as the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. The Mechanism is operational and has continued its cooperation and coordination with the OPCW Technical Secretariat and member States.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

Annex

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled "Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme", prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of OPCW Executive Council Decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council (see enclosure). My report covers the period from 23 March to 22 April 2017 and fulfils the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

(*Signed*) Ahmet **Üzümcü**

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

Note by the Director-General

Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme

Background

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter "the Council") at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.

2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities" (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation "in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1".

3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria" (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015) noting the Director-General's intent to include reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria, along with information on the Council's discussion thereof, as part of the monthly reporting pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). Similarly, the Council, at its Eighty-First Session, adopted a decision entitled "Report by the Director-General Regarding the Declaration and Related Submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-81/DEC.4, dated 23 March 2016), noting the Director-General's intent to provide information on the implementation of that decision.

4. The Council, at its Eighty-Third Session, adopted a decision entitled "OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-83/DEC.5, dated 11 November 2016). In subparagraph 12(a) of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall "regularly inform the Council on the implementation of this decision and incorporate information regarding the implementation of this decision into his monthly reporting to the United Nations Security Council, through the United Nations Secretary-General, regarding EC-M-33/DEC.1".

5. This, the forty-third monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions and includes information relevant to the period from 23 March 2017 to 22 April 2017.

Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of Executive Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1

6. Progress by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:

(a) The Secretariat has verified the destruction of 24 of the 27 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. The

security situation still continues to preclude safe access both for the Syrian Arab Republic to destroy the remaining aircraft hangar, which stands ready to accept the explosive charges, and for the Secretariat to confirm the condition of the two stationary above-ground facilities.

(b) On 18 April 2017, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its forty-first monthly report (EC-85/P/NAT.2, dated 18 April 2017) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities

7. As reported previously, all of the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic that were removed from its territory in 2014 have now been destroyed.

Activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decisions EC-81/DEC.4 and EC-83/DEC.5

8. As reported previously, an invitation was sent to the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic, H.E. Dr. Faisal Mekdad, and his delegation to resume high-level consultations to address the unresolved issues related to the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration, in accordance with Council decision EC-81/DEC.4 and paragraph 6 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5. The planned consultations will be carried out on the basis of a matrix that summarises the issues pertaining to the Syrian declaration, after the Syrian Arab Republic has submitted, in advance of the consultations, any new documents and other information as requested by the Secretariat, in order to achieve tangible progress. The timing is currently under consideration, and the Director-General will report to the Council on these consultations.

9. In accordance with paragraph 11 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the first inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre took place from 26 February to 5 March 2017. Samples were taken by the inspection team and were sent to OPCW designated laboratories for analysis. The Secretariat is awaiting the analysis results before completing the final inspection report.

Other activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic

10. As previously reported, amendments to the tripartite agreement between United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the OPCW, and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and to the contribution agreement between the OPCW and UNOPS are currently under review. These amendments will extend the support provided by UNOPS to the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic until the end of December 2017, and ensure that the necessary administrative and logistical support is provided to the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

11. As requested by the Council at its Seventy-Fifth Session (paragraph 7.12 of EC-75/2, dated 7 March 2014), the Secretariat, on behalf of the Director-General, has continued to brief States Parties in The Hague on its activities.

12. As at the cut-off date of this report, one OPCW staff member was deployed as part of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Supplementary resources

13. As previously reported, a Trust Fund for Syria Missions was established in November 2015 to support the FFM and other remaining activities, such as those of the Declaration Assessment Team. As at the cut-off date of this report, contribution agreements totalling EUR 9.7 million had been concluded with Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Monaco, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union.

Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria

14. As stated by the Director-General on 13 April 2017 during the Fifty-Fourth Meeting of the Council, the FFM is focusing its work on the allegations of use of chemical weapons on 4 April 2017 in the Khan Shaykhun area of southern Idlib in the Syrian Arab Republic, which reportedly resulted in the deaths of over 80 people, including children, and injuries to hundreds of others.

15. On 4 April 2017, a note verbale was sent to the Syrian Arab Republic requesting its authorities to share, as soon as possible, any information they might have about the incidents reported by the media on that day. A similar note verbale was also sent on 5 April 2017 to all States Parties. Additionally, at the request of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Director-General made available to all States Parties a letter regarding that incident, which was received on 5 April 2017 from the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic, H.E. Dr. Faisal Mekdad.

16. On 11 April 2017, the Director-General received another letter from H.E. Dr. Faisal Mekdad, inviting the OPCW to deploy a technical mission to both Khan Shaykhun and Al-Shayrat airbase "to establish the facts with respect to what really happened, in an exhaustive and transparent manner". In a letter received on 13 April 2017, the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, H.E. Sergey Lavrov, requested the preparation of an ad hoc mission to visit Khan Shaykhun and Al-Shayrat airbase.

17. During the resumption of the Fifty-Fourth Meeting of the Council on 19 April 2017, the Director-General explained that while the FFM had not yet been able to visit the said location and review original records in situ, the team had to date collected facts in the form of:

(a) witness interviews and statements (taken as audio and/or video recordings), as well as documents, photos, and videos handed over by witnesses. The collection process was still ongoing;

(b) various biomedical samples collected in the presence of team members, either from patients undergoing treatment or at autopsy. Such samples had been sent to OPCW designated laboratories; and

(c) environmental samples collected by witnesses and/or representatives of non-governmental organizations.

18. The biomedical samples collected from three victims at autopsy were analysed at two OPCW designated laboratories. The results of the analyses indicated that these victims were exposed to sarin or a sarin-like substance. Biomedical samples from seven individuals undergoing treatment at hospitals were also analysed at two other OPCW designated laboratories. Similarly, the results of these analyses indicated exposure to sarin or a sarin-like substance.

19. The FFM is currently continuing the process of interviews, evidence management, and sample acquisition. A first interim report is expected to be

completed in the coming weeks, at which time it will be submitted for the consideration of the States Parties and shared with the JIM.

20. At the aforementioned Fifty-Fourth Meeting of the Council, a draft decision entitled "Addressing the Situation Around the Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in the Khan Shaykhun Area of Southern Idlib in the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-M-54/DEC/CRP.1, dated 13 April 2017) was circulated by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation. A revised version of the draft decision (EC-M-54/DEC/CRP.1/Rev.1, dated 19 April 2017) was further amended on 20 April before being considered by the Council and put to a vote. The draft decision was not adopted.

21. The FFM has also continued its work to investigate the allegations of use of chemical weapons at Um-Housh on around 15 and 16 September 2016, as requested by the Syrian Arab Republic in a letter dated 29 November 2016. Based on the interviews carried out by the FFM and the documents and other related materials reviewed, as well as the results of blood sample analyses, the FFM can confirm that the two female casualties reported to have been involved in the incident in Um-Housh were exposed to sulfur mustard. The report on this incident will be submitted for the consideration of States Parties in the coming days, and will also be forwarded to the JIM.

22. Guided by Council decisions EC-M-48/DEC.1 and EC-M-50/DEC.1 (dated 23 November 2015), as well as United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015), the FFM continued to study all available information relating to the allegations of use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Conclusion

23. The main focus of the future activities of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will be on the activities of the FFM and on the implementation of Council decisions EC-83/DEC.5 and EC-81/DEC.4, as well as on the destruction and verification of the remaining aircraft hangar, confirmation of the status of the two stationary above-ground facilities, and annual inspections of the underground structures already verified as destroyed.